

The Pettison Firsts By Marion Hill



Rex.

THE little Pettison twins sat in the nursery eating the daily morning orange. It was an inevitable and impressive function and deserves to be capitalized, THE DAILY MORNING ORANGE.

It was not given to them as a treat but to aid digestion, and they were told

to take only the juice and on no account the pulp. As a consequence the twins loathed juice and hankered for pulp. This latter they had to chew well and keep for maternal inspection to back up their guarantee that they had not swallowed it. So afraid were they that any might get away from them that they deposited each mouthful in their tiny hands, and heroically held on to the disconsolate wads. The whole performance was a mighty horror to them.

"What's this we're doing?" demanded Regina, calling a halt on her chewing long enough to fire her sulky question at her brother. She wore a scowl an inch thick.

"What's what?" counterdemanded Rex, also chewing, also sulky, though to a lesser degree, for he had certain resources of the mind that his sister lacked. She lived always in the horrible present, while he sometimes harked back to the softened past. "What's what?"

"*This?*" and she very viciously exaggerated her jaw movement.

"Ah-h-h," purred Rex, the joy of definite occupation clearing the sulkiness from his face. He obligingly angled in his memory, a remarkably retentive one, and soon fished forth his word,—

"Masticating."

"Humph," grunted Regina, deepening her scowl as she ruminatingly chewed up the word with her pulp.

Their mother was bringing up these, her first offspring, according to the most beautiful, cast-iron theories, and "baby-talk" had been sternly tabooed from the very beginning; it therefore behooved Regina to draw often upon her brother for what she forgot. Mentally he was a wonder, not so much in the realm of pure thought, perhaps, as in the lower plane of abstract memorizing; what he heard once was his forever, and he could always repeat it verbatim with an air of wisdom, whether he understood it or not.

The orange thankfully finished, both

With Drawings by Jessie Wilcox Smith



children sat looking at the cup-like rinds of the despised and wholesome fruit.

"What do they look like to you?" asked Rex, thoughtfully.

Not being any more desperately imaginative than he was, she did not answer prettily that they looked like "golden boats" or "fairy hats," or even "cute little doll dishes." She dispassionately surveyed them and delivered herself of this cautious verdict:—

"They look like orange peel."

Rex cast her a glance of grudging admiration. He liked an orderly mind, though it gave him extra trouble now and then.

"What picture do they look like?" he patiently amended.

Thus kindly steered, Regina at once arrived at the right place.

"Look like the picture of the toy scales in last Sunday's paper."

"Let's make some."

They proceeded with as much calmness and method as if they had been planning the thing for weeks. From his pockets the boy took a knife and two pencils with which he set up the T-frame for his scales, and the girl pulled out enough hair from her tow-colored braids to serve as string to suspend the cups of peel. They soon had their weighing machine going at full blast, using orange pits for weights and bits of pulp for merchandise.

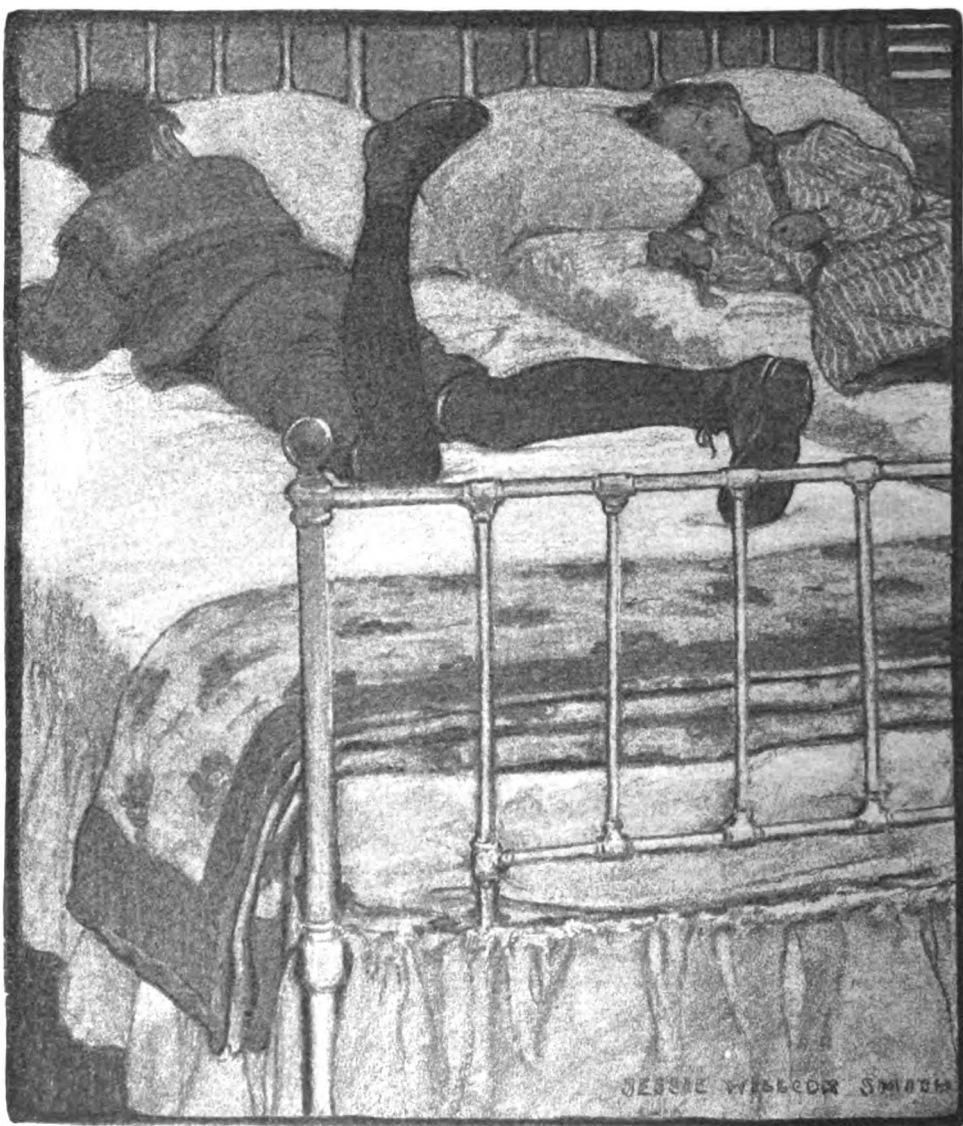
They were having a good time, a matter so difficult of accomplishment with them that it is a pity they should have been disturbed. But they were.

Their mother—a pretty young woman always neatly dressed and finished off with an extremely high white collar, no matter what the heat, the cold or state of affairs—entered the room with a smile on her face and a watch in her hand. The smile was as much a thing of winding up as was the watch, for Mrs. Pettison was governed utterly by a book she possessed on "Ideal Motherhood," and it advocated constant smiling at children as the surest and purest means of



Regina.

making the little ones "radiant." Nature had not disposed the twins to "radiate" sufficiently, and consequently Mrs. Pettison smiled at them most painstakingly. But Mrs. Pettison was not discouraged. She was a member of The Mothers' League, and the leagued mothers all testified that since the abolishment of spanking, these saner and sweeter methods are slow in effect and require patient repetition.



"Oh, why does the fun you're out of sound so much funnier than when you're in it?"

Therefore, whenever Mrs. Pettison looked upon her offspring, whether in love or in war, she beamed beautifully, as now.

"Come, come, children," she gurgled, "put away that nonsense and take your nap. *All GOOD* little boys and girls take a nap before dinner." The emphasis upon "good" was deliciously lilting. Her voice ran up and down several hills of glee.

But the twins remained stolid and

refused to be unworthily cajoled.

"Oh, we do not have to sleep to-day, do we—not to-day?" wailed Regina, in the voice of one who was being drawn and quartered.

"Why not to-day?" still smiling.

"Why, I thought that as you and Pa were go—"

"I and *who*?"

"You and Pa were—"

"*Who*?"

Such a nice wide smile went with

this word that Regina knew something serious was the matter, so she gazed at Rex for help. He very kindly mouthed something which enabled her to proceed.

"You and *Papá*," she said, giving a violent French accent to the paternal title.

"Ah!"

"That as you and *Papá* were going away on the train to watch Uncle Edward die, perhaps we might stay up."

"We do not go away until this evening. Moreover, with good old Catherine in the kitchen, and a trained nurse (whom I am looking for every minute), to attend to you children and the baby, I expect the household affairs to go on to-day and every day exactly as they do while I am here. So run away to sleep, both of you."

Gloomily, Regina wandered to her mother's side and deposited in the maternal palm her damp and clammy wad of orange pulp.

"It is well—masticated," she said, wearily.

Rex followed suit.

"I masticated, too."

Hand in hand, they turned away.

"Remember, no talking," called their mother after them, and they could feel her smile playing up and down their backs.

It being a rule in the Pettison family that children should make some sort of a vocal response to every remark made to them, the twins chorused vaguely, "Yes, Mamma," and continued their wretched way to the bedroom.

They shut the shutters, pulled down the blinds and then disposed themselves upon their separate cot beds.

They were obedient children, but still more were they literal; and as to them the forbidden "talking" meant conversing in the natural voice, they therefore exchanged thought in sibilant whispers with consciences free of offense.

"Do you hear that Rexie?" came purling from Regina in a most pianissimo plaint, as she referred to some cheerful sounds which floated in from the happy outside; "do you hear that sort of thumpety-lick, thumpety-lick?"

That's Hattie Carse and her new cousin with the skipping rope. They are jumping pepper-salt-mustard-vinegar. There! She's missed on vinegar. Vinegar's awful easy. I can go to vinegar any time I want. Dear me, if I was only out there I'd show them!"

She tossed miserably on the bed and tugged at her braids, veritable life lines in time of trouble.

Rex, short-haired, saved himself from insanity by exercising his legs. He kicked—not with passion, not with pain, nor with pleasure. He simply and rhythmically kicked. Once, a fascinating rattle from the street petrified his legs high in air, like two fence posts, as he hissed, breathlessly:—

"Just listen, Regina. There is Harry Mason's hook-and-ladder wagon. I wonder if he's asked the Pratt boy to play fire with him instead of waiting for me? We'd built a little house of logs in the empty lot and were going to set it afire and then put it out. If they do it without me, I'll—I'll—I don't know what. Oh, gee! oh, gee!"

"Why is 'gee' a bad word?" demanded his sister, propping herself upon an elbow and hoping for the worst. But a burst of boyish laughter from outside so distracted Rex that he could but wail:—

"Oh, why does the fun you're out of sound so much funnier than when you're in it?"

"Because it is funnier!" settled Regina, going to the heart of the matter like a true woman. "Oh, why do we have to sleep in the day time?"

"We don't sleep," observed Rex, who was never too agonized to be precise.

"Is there any way to make you sleep when you can't?"

"Count sheep going over a gate. They have to jump pretty high, and get down soft on the other side. Start in."

A long silence; then, in a wailing whisper:—

"All my sheep have gone over, Rexie!"

"So've mine."

"And have you gone to sleep?"

"I'm widerer awake than ever—wide awaker—widerer awaker."

"So'm I," said Regina, heartlessly uninterested in the er-problem which was racking her brother's brain, and out of which he rescued himself by announcing in a relieved tone:—

"Wider awake."

They wriggled through the rest of the wretched hour as best they might, until their mother came in with watch, smile and cheerful bangs of shutters, and regulated another form of diversion for them.

"Jump up, little sleepy-heads! Jump up! It is time now for you to play."

There was no jump in them. The word play coming from its present source held no promise of skipping rope or fire patrol. This the twins well knew. They rolled to the edges of their cots and dropped to the floor, where, with the air of martyrs, they took off their shoes and stockings. Then they picked a bare-footed and precarious way down stairs to the front yard, and among the hidden "prickers" of a fair-appearing lawn, until they reached an irrelevant sand-pile which disfigured one corner of it. Upon this they ensconced themselves, sitting in silence, prodding their sulky little toes into the dirt and permitting the sun to beat upon their sulky little heads. The thought of an hour of this hilarity was stamped in anguish upon their countenances.

While they were in the height of their enjoyment a young woman opened the garden gate and started up the path to the house. She stopped when she saw the children. She wore glasses, carried a dress-suit case, and when she spoke it was in the tone of one who held her business to be important. It was Miss Cumby, the trained nurse. The knowledge that she was worth twenty dollars a week increased her natural force of character.

"Is this Mrs. Pettison's?" she demanded crisply.

"Yes," snarled Regina. Regina had had all that she could stand.

"And we are the twins," supplemented Rex, to forestall a question always sure to be asked.

"Oh, you are the twins, are you?" said Miss Cumby, as she kept her

gaze glued to Rex's face, fascinated by its misery, and never so much as included Regina by the turn of an eye. Rex, who was as modest as literal, felt impelled to decline some of the honor, and so said, drearily:—

"No, I'm only one of them."

"And I'm the other," groaned Regina.

"Indeed? And why are you so unhappy?"

"Dunno."

"Is there anything the matter?"

Regina rolled her eyes at Rex.

"No, I think not," he answered dubiously. "Except sitting here."

"Why do you sit here, then?"

No answer.

"What in the world are you doing?"

"Playing," snapped Regina, and her tone fully suggested "you idiot!"

"Ah, it is pleasant to be bare-footed, is it not?"

"No," firmly remarked Rex.

"It's just as nasty as nasty!" growled Regina.

"Then what do you go that way for?"

Regina had a hazy knowledge, but, as usual, she had lost her grip on the words, so she prodded Rex with her elbow as a signal for him to go ahead.

He angled again in his memory and eventually got it all out.

"The earth has electricity in it. Electricity is good for boys and girls, but it can't bore through boots, so we go barefoot. Then we get sunlight and fresh air and electricity, and it all does us good."

"Without doubt, without doubt," asserted Miss Cumby, nodding professionally. She went on to the front door, and the twins surveyed each other long and commiseratingly.

Rex trotted out his new possession. "The household affairs," he said, thoughtfully parroting his mother's words, "*will* go on just the same."

"I guess yes."

They "played" for half an hour more, and then Miss Cumby, in complete uniform, even to the white cap, bore down upon them. In her hands she carried two tea-cups.



The sun beat down upon their sulky little heads.

"It's the hot water!" hissed Rex, melodramatically.

His sister nodded, ejaculating under her breath, "Well, of all the funny dresses!"

"Here is your hot water, children," said Miss Cumby, smiling carefully in accordance with recent instructions. "Your Ma sent it out to you."

"Our Mamma," sighed Rex, correctively.

"She said you must be thirsty."

"We are," scowled Regina, "but not for hot sloppiness!"

This struck Rex as being the cleverest kind of repartee, and he began an enchanted giggle, which was frozen dead at its birth.

"Little girl," rasped Miss Cumby, smiling fiercely, "hot water is better for you than cold. Either drink it or do not drink it. There is no necessity for being unladylike and impertinent."

Regina curled up like a crushed cat-erpillar. She had tried the new nurse and had been downed. Rex, visibly impressed, thought it safer to declare himself at once upon the side of the newcomer, which he did by saying reproachfully:—

"I'm surprised at you, Regina. Cold water is bad. It hurts the digestion and lowers the—lowers the—"

"Temperature!" chirped Regina, quite cheered by this, a rare proficiency.

"Temperature! I remember it from 'temper.' Hot water gives you 'temper' and cold water gives you temperature—"

"And lowers the temperature of the stomach. Oh, Regina (this with rapturous abandon), do you remember the *heavenly* time when we were on the train and had to drink ice-water from that thing in the corner?"

Regina answered by gasping like a trout and clapping both hands upon her abdomen.

Miss Cumby glared at her new charges as if she considered them a bit uncanny, and, concluding that decision was a trump card to play, said briefly, "Lunch!" and led the way to the table.

The Pettison meals were marvelous.

Everything was so hygienic that it was horrible.

To-day's menu consisted of bran gruel, with gluten bread. Next came graham monstrosities labeled "gems," and certainly as hard. Oatmeal tea helped to wash these down. As entrees came soft-boiled eggs, so soft that their hatching qualities were quite unimpaired. Dessert was in the form of tapioca pudding, made without eggs, milk or sugar.

The method which ordered the table reigned serene throughout the house. Even the hurried packing made necessary by a peremptory summoning to the bedside of a dying relative was accomplished decently and in due time, so that when Mr. Pettison arrived from the office his grip was in readiness for him, his household was running smoothly, and warranted so to run for a week or more, and his wife was hatted and cloaked for the journey.

Mr. Pettison was an old young man with a weakness for gray suits all the year round. He was a trifle undersized, and consequently wore his hair very pompadour indeed. In public he was a gray nonentity. At home he was a god-like genius.

Even the fact of its being as late as seventeen minutes to train time did not cripple his executive powers.

"Has the baby had her crying spell this afternoon?" he demanded of Miss Cumby.

"Oh, no, sir. She is sleeping quietly."

"I'm sorry. Crying is a baby's exercise. It develops the lungs and establishes a good heart action. Wake her up, if you please, and let her have a cry."

"Very well, sir."

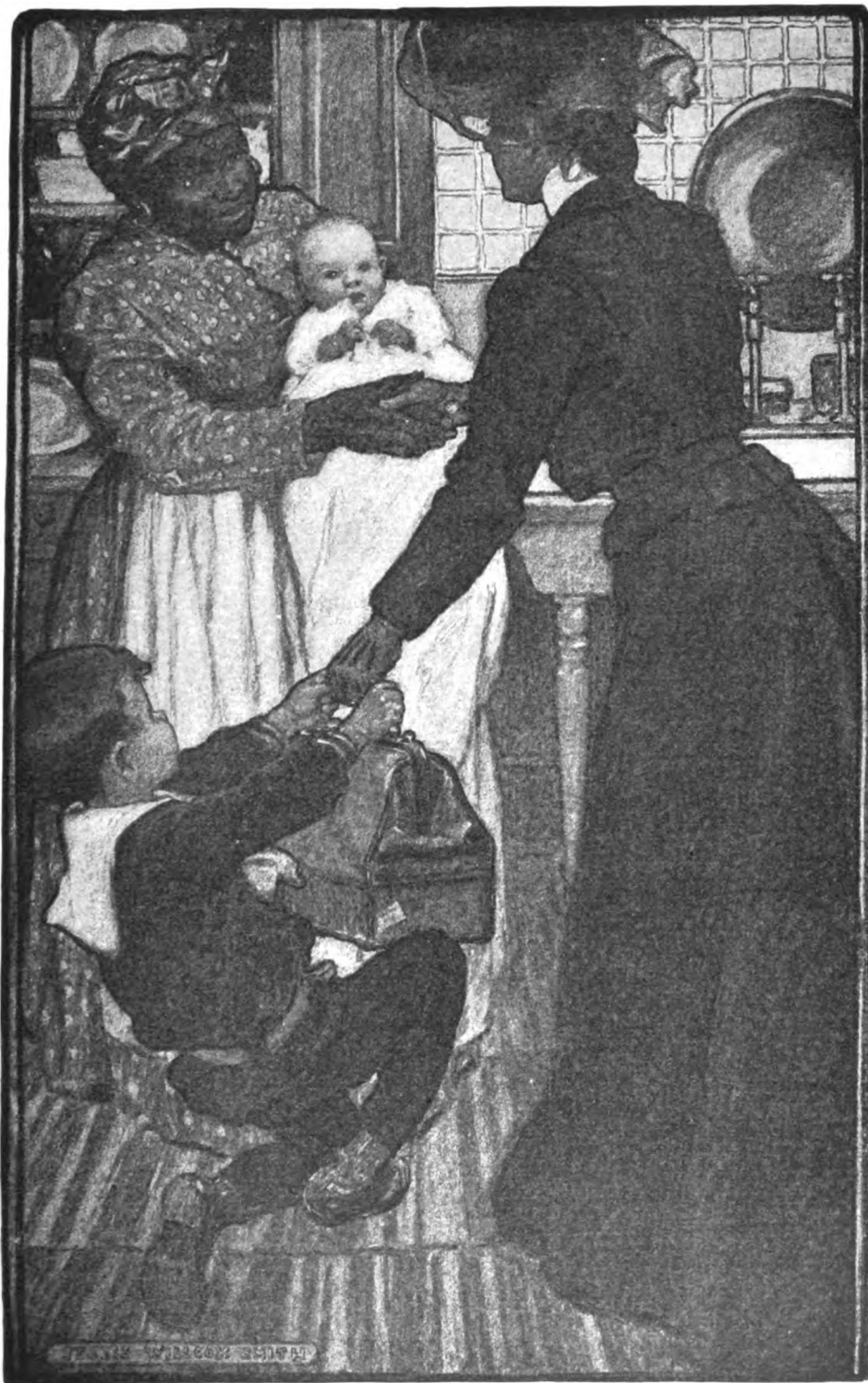
"You know how much she weighs?"

"Twelve pounds, five ounces."

"If we are not back by the end of the week weigh her again and send us the result. A normal baby should gain at least four ounces a week. Sometimes ours does and sometimes she does not. We are dissatisfied with her growth. You have been told about the preparing of her food?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the sterilizing of her bottles?"



"Mis' Pett'son! we suttinly ben havin' the time!"

"Yes, sir."

"And you understand that she must never be fed oftener than once every three hours?"

"Yes, sir. You may depend upon me to attend to everything."

Miss Cumby looked so capable, not to say superior, that Mr. Pettison omitted further directions and saying, "Come along, Mrs. Pettison," exactly as if, instead of being poised for flight, she was clinging to the perch, he grabbed up the grips and they were off.

Miss Cumby's letter was sent at the end of the first week. In it she reported a fair amount of success; praised the efficiency of Catherine; admitted the obedience of the twins; confessed that they lacked much of the required radiance, being very melancholy of countenance and unenthusiastic about their play; regretted that the baby had gained only three and three-quarters of the normal four ounces; chronicled that she had waked it daily for its dole of crying; told that she had refrained from giving it food any oftener than once in three hours; charged them to have no uneasiness about the household; asked after the lingering relative, and signed herself theirs respectfully.

It was a comfortable letter, and made things easier for Mr. and Mrs. Pettison during their enforced absence. At the end of the second week they heard nothing at all. Then they telegraphed, but received no reply. Pitying their frantic demands, the hotel clerk made a more thorough search through his pigeon-holes and apologetically produced a letter which had followed the first by twelve hours. It was from Catherine's sister. Miss Cumby had fallen downstairs, fractured her thigh and had been removed in an ambulance. The fright had given Catherine nervous prostration and symptoms of brain fever, so that she had been taken to her own home. In the meanwhile old Celia, the colored wash woman, had undertaken to look after the children, and would Mr. and Mrs. Pettison please come home immediately.

Immediately, and more than a week had already passed!

Fatherhood and motherhood the world

over will sympathize with the distracted pair during their return journey. Never before had the train stopped so often or so long in getting to their town. Never before had the street cars crawled so shamefully in covering the distance from the depot to their street. Never before had their feet been so tardy in getting from the street corner to their own front door. Even the key stuck.

They entered and paused. The house now reverberated. It sounded like a kindergarten at a cakewalk. Following the shouts, the Pettisons tore to the kitchen. Celia was there with the baby. Celia bellowing, the baby cooing. As for the twins, they were "radiating" in perpetual grins and shouts of laughter. There, also, were six or seven colored men and women sitting around sociably upon the chairs, tables, gas range and ice-box, and all talking together. These latter at once took an unobtrusive departure.

"Whee-e-e, Maw!" yelled Rex, tugging at her skirts.

"Whoopee-ee, Paw!" screamed Regina, striving to shin up the paternal leg.

Then, both together, "Look at baby. Look at little toddy-wiggle making goo-goo eyes!"

"Haw! haw! haw! Mis' Pett'son!" boomed Celia in echoing guffaws. "We suttinly ben havin' the time! Mighty glad yo' had yo' visit out. Knowed yo' could trust ole Celia, didn' yo'? Well, I raikon!"

She was vigorously shaking hands with her patrons. She only needed one to hold the baby, so ample was her generous black form that, wherever she pressed the lucky, comfortable infant, there was a bulgy soft shelf for it.

"What has happened? How have you got along? Tell us everything," gasped the Pettisons.

"Oh, g'way, Mis' Pett'son! G'wan upstairs an' tek yo' things offen yo', an' I'll mek a cup o' tea—fust. Hyar! yo' two chilluns, leave yo' Paw and Maw be twel they git they breff. Chase yo'sefs! G'wan! How offen yo' want me to tell yo' the same thing twice? Chase!"

Grinning and obedient, the twins "chased," and virtually the mother

and father did the same. Celia seemed to be in command, and things appeared to be in safe and sound order—and, after all, why shouldn't they take their traveling garments off and know the comfort of some home-made tea?

Half an hour later, after a hurried inspection of the house, which satisfied them that everything was more than ordinarily beaming and blissful, the Pettisons called Celia into the sitting-room to have her explain her methods of obtaining such desirable results.

"Did the older children take their daily nap, Celia?"

"Yas'm. Oh, yas'm." Celia's replies were rich and unctuous.

"They took their nap without trouble?"

"No trubble 't all. Yas'm."

"I am agreeably surprised. How did you manage it?"

"I din' manage hit, Mis' Pett'son. Dey manage hit dey own sels. Dey tore an' rampage 'roun' so consid'rubble dat dey' jes' nachelly drap mos' anywheres and go sleep."

"What? With no regularity of time or place?"

"Oh, yas'm. De reg'larty was sutlin' 'markable. De time was alluz meal time an' de place was unner de dinin' room table."

Mrs. Pettison bit her lip and looked worried. "Dear me, how terribly unmethodical! What exercise tired them out so completely?"

"I raikon 't was playin' in dat dere hummock o' dirt."

"Strange! They are not always as keen about that as I would like."

"Yas'm. Yo' kaint put a pot on a col' stove an' say, 'Now, bile.' Yo' has ter mek a fire unner hit; an' chil'luns kain't pley less dey wukkin.' So I tell um how pity 't was dey parents won't let um move dat dirt over t'other side de yard; an', toreckly dey hear dat, dey start smack in to do hit, an' dey jes' shovel and' putter in dat dirt twel domesday, 'less I call um in to eat."

"Ah, about their eating—were you particular about their food and was their appetite good?"

"Scan'lous good. It shore kep' me on de jump scoopin' up de pickles for

um' and puttin' sugar on dey braid an' butter."

"Oh, Celia! *Celia!*" cried Mrs. Pettison, in dismay.

"Yas'm," grinned Celia, taking Mrs. Pettison's expression to be the amazement of too much pleasure.

Discreetly dropping the unlucky food question, Mrs. Pettison took the safer ground of praising Celia for her beneficent effect upon the twins' usual gloom, and asked her what sunshine she employed to bring about the sweet result.

"I done tole um dat ef dey kep' a-goin' 'roun' *me* lak dey had de stum-mickache, I'd jes' nachelly fray de hides offen um," said Celia, rolling her eyes fiercely, like a tragedy queen. "Co'se, Mis' Pett'son, yo' unnerstan', I was on'y talkin' in parables, but de parables wukked an' dey cheered up amazin'. Dey done lose dat colicky look right off."

Here Mr. Pettison broke in explosively. He had been weighing the "toddy-wiggle."

"She has gained over a pound!" he cried, with incredulous glee.

"Dat all?" mourned Celia. "Humph! Po' lil' lamb ac' jes' lak she half starve when I tek hol' of her. So I fill her up good. Ever' time she open her lil' mouf I done stick in a bottle. Dey ent been a cheep outen her."

"You did not make her wait three hours between feedings?" gasped the mother in a frenzy.

"Don' yo' frazzle yo'sef, Mis' Pett'son," said Celia, soothingly, "I din' mek her wait three minute ef she ac' lack she want some mo'."

"Goodness gracious me, woman!" burst in Mr. Pettison. "How in the world did the little one digest so much? Did you wake her up to cry?"

Celia thought she detected sarcasm and rolled her eyes at him reproachfully. "'Deed I 's'nt no sech a fool, Mr. Pett'son. What yo' tek me for?"

"And the bottles—the bottles!" interrogated Mrs. Pettison, feverishly. "Did you sterilize them twice daily, Celia?"

"Celia looked badly stumped.

"Stai'lize? How dat—I ent know 'bout dat wo'd 'stai'lize.'"

"It means to boil—to make surgi-

cally clean. Do not say that you neglected to clean them."

"Clean um?" said Celia, bellowing in her relief. "Co'se I clean um! Ent goin' to give no baby alive dirty bottles to feed outen!"

"But *how* did you clean them? What was your process?"

"I processed same lak I wash anything. I swish um 'roun' good in a mess o' soapsuds. Den I rensh um. Den I stick um on nails in de fence to dry in de sun."

"On rusty nails?"

Celia looked for the first time worried and at fault. "I ent know yo' want um stuck on rusty nails, Mis' Pett'son," she said, apologetically. "No one done tol' me dat."

"Oh, I did not—I did not!" wailed Mrs. Pettison, wringing her hands.

Celia cheered again and bellowed. "Den jes' yo' quit yo' worritin' Mis' Pett'son. Yo' might know I'd wash um right!"

"It can't be helped, Celia; you did your best. But to sterilize a thing you have to boil it."

"Humph! Stai'lize mean bile?"

"Yes. We boil every single thing the baby puts into her mouth—twice a day."

Celia's eyes bulged.

"Yo' bile dat lil' lamb's fingers twicer day? Oh, g'way, Mis' Pett'son, yo' sholy foolin'?"

Mrs. Pettison's bewildered eyes followed Celia's to the sofa, where the youngest Pettison lay serenely sucking her hand.

The Pettisons looked helplessly at each other and gave the whole thing up.

They paid Celia liberally—liberally enough to venture to ask her to go at once. She agreed, highly pleased that her methods had been worth such big money.

"An' I'll come again an' he'p yo' out, Mis' Pett'son, toreckly yo' send for me. Yas'm. Good-by. I'se goin' home now to stai'lize my ole man a dish o' stew. Yas'm. Good-by."

Mrs. Pettison tottered to the bookcase and hunted around for "Ideal Motherhood." She felt that she could not find it a minute too soon.

HOW JERRY McLEAN DELIVERED THE GOODS

By HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER,

Author of "Calumet K," "Roger Drake, Captain of Industry," Etc.



THE young man who had just entered the office handed his card to the boy who guarded the gate. "Take that to Mr. Mark, will you?" he said, pleasantly. Then he pulled up the most comfortable chair the corner of the outer office afforded, and sat down to wait.

Presently the boy came back. "See you by-and-by," he remarked. The young man nodded, and taking from his pocket a leather-bound catalogue with The National Rubber Belting Co., and below, Jeremiah McLean, stamped upon the cover in gilt letters, he began figuring upon one of the blank leaves with a finely-pointed, hard lead pencil.

Every little while he would glance up, then turn back to his figuring again.

Jerry McLean was facing a critical half hour, a half hour in which he stood a chance to win a great prize—for Jerry—but an equally good, or perhaps a better, chance not to win it. If you had seen him just then, industriously figuring away, his hat on the back of his head, and a morsel of Floradora on his lips, or rather, between his teeth, for that was the way he always whistled, you might have supposed him unaware of the importance of the occasion. But you would have been wrong. He and one other were the only two in the whole world who did know.

The other was a girl, who wore, on